

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 13017 01 OF 02 041813Z
ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSM-01 EUR-08 AF-04 NSC-05
NSCE-00 SP-02 L-01 PM-05 PRS-01 ACDA-10 IO-06
OMB-01 /066 W
-----088573 041920Z /44

R 041700Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8009
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CAIRO 13017

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EG, LY, MOPS
SUBJECT: EGYPT/LIBYA: SETTING THE STAGE

REFS: (A) CAIRO 12529, (B) CAIRO 12884 (C) CAIRO 12905 (D) TRIPOLI 997

SUMMARY: THREE MAJOR FIGURES IN EGYPTIAN BODY POLITIC, SADAT,
SALIM AND GAMASY, ARE NOW ON PUBLIC RECORD WITH THEIR VIEWS OF
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 13017 01 OF 02 041813Z

RELATIONS WITH LIBYA AND RECENT BORDER CLASHES (REFS A, B, AND C).
SEVERAL COMMON THEMES EMERGE IN SPEECHES ALL THREE LEADERS: BASIC
LEGITIMACY OF EGYPTIAN ACTIONS; SOVIET AUTHORSHIP OF OVERALL
PLAN TO ISOLATE EGYPT AND SOVIET RESPONSIBILITY FOR QADHAFI
ACTIONS; AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, EGYPT'S WILLINGNESS REPEAT MILITARY
ACTION.

ADDITIONALLY, EGYPTIAN LEADERS--GAMASY IN PARTICULAR--HAVE DEFINED TRIP-WIRE WHICH WILL LEAD TO RENEWED EGYPTIAN ACTION, AND HAVE PLACED CONTROL OF THIS ALMOST SOLELY IN EGYPTIAN HANDS. GOE APPEARS TO HAVE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT ARAB REACTION AND TO HAVE CONCLUDED THIS NOT SUFFICIENTLY COUNTERVAILING TO PRECLUDE FURTHER MILITARY ACTION. (POSSIBLY THEY HAVE PRIVATE MESSAGES FROM SELECTED ARAB LEADERS WHICH CONTRADICT NEGATIVE AND NEUTRAL PUBLIC REACTIONS TO INTRA-ARAB FIGHTING.) CONTINUED LIBYAN PROPAGANDA EFFORTS DEPICT EGYPT AS "LOSER" IN BORDER CLASHES, AND QADHAFI'S OBVIOUS LACK OF ABSORPTION EGYPTIAN "LESSON", COULD ENCOURAGE FIRMER REPETITION OF CORPORAL INSTRUCTION. IN PARTICULAR, GOE WILL BE CLOSELY MONITORING QADHAFI'S ACTIONS. END SUMMARY

1. PRESIDENT SADAT, PRIME MINISTER SALIM, AND MINISTER OF WAR GAMASY HAVE NOW MADE EXTENSIVE PUBLIC REMARKS ON STATE OF EGYPTIAN/LIBYAN RELATIONS AND ON EVENTS SURROUNDING RECENT BORDER FIGHTING. THEY HAVE ALL STRESSED LEGITIMACY OF EGYPT'S MILITARY ACTION AS RESPONSE TO BLATANT OVERT LIBYAN AGGRESSION. EGYPTIAN LEADERS HAVE LAID OUT CHRONOLOGY LIBYAN TRANSGRESSIONS, CONCENTRATING ON MULTITUDE OF SABOTAGE ACTS. NUMBER OF ALLEGED INCIDENTS VARIES--GAMASY SET TOTAL AT 28, SADAT PUT FIGURE MUCH HIGHER--BUT, DESPITE UNCERTAINTY AS TO PRECISE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS, THERE LITTLE DOUBT THAT LEADERS (AND GENERAL PUBLIC) BELIEVE QADHAFI BEARS RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAIMING OF EGYPTIAN CITIZENS.

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PAGE 03 CAIRO 13017 01 OF 02 041813Z

2. EGYPTIANS HAVE ALSO GONE TO CONSIDERABLE LENGTH TO ESTABLISH THAT IT WAS LIBYA WHICH (A) INITIATED FIRE ON BORDER POSTS, (B) FIRST CROSSED FRONTIER (NEAR MUSA'ID), (C) INTRODUCED HEAVY WEAPONS INTO FIGHTING AND (D) BEGAN AIR BATTLES. IN DOING SO, LEADERS HAVE CONCEDED LIBYANS ACHIEVED INITIAL TACTICAL SURPRISE. GAMASY, IN STATEMENT TO PEOPLES ASSEMBLY, INDICATED EGYPTIAN ACTIONS THROUGHOUT CLASH WERE CAREFULLY GRADUATED RESPONSES TO LIBYAN ESCALATION (AT LEAST UNTIL AIR STRIKE ON KUFRAH OASIS AND COMMANDO RAID ON JAGHBUB GUERRILLA CAMP). IN DOING THIS, LEADERS HAVE NOT STIPULATED EQUAL RESTRAINT IN FUTURE BATTLES. IN FACT, SADAT PUBLICLY STATED THAT IN EVENT FURTHER FIGHTING ERUPTS EGYPT WILL HIT LIBYA "HARD".

3. SOVIET ROLE. SPEECHES HAVE MADE CLEAR EGYPTIAN VIEW THAT SOVIETS BEAR ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECENT EVENTS, CONCLUDING THAT USSR ATTEMPTING ISOLATE EGYPT THROUGH MACHINATIONS IN CHAD, ZAIRE, SUDAN, ETHIOPIA, AND SOMALIA, UTILIZING SURROGATES. SOPHISTICATED VERSION HAS SOVIETS ATTEMPTING MOVE INTO POWER VACUUM IN AFRICA, WHICH WESTERN POWERS AND PARTICULARLY US, ABANDONING TO USSR. EGYPTO-CENTRIC VARIANT HAS ALL THIS ACTIVITY SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT TOPPLING SADAT. IN EITHER CASE, EGYPTIANS CLEARLY PERCEIVE DANGER ON EASTERN AND SOUTHERN

BORDERS EFFECTING SECURITY OF THEIR STATE. RECENT PUBLIC
SPEECHES AND (GUIDED) PRESS ACCOUNTS PUT THESE DANGERS FOR
MOMENT ABOVE THOSE EMANATING FROM TRADITIONAL ISRAELI ENEMY
AND HAVE SGRESSED EGYPT WILL RESPOND MILITARILY TO ATTACK ON SUDAN.

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 13017 02 OF 02 041813Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 CAIRO 13017

LIMDIS

4. QADHAFI AS SOVIET PUPPET. SIGNIFICANTLY, IN ALL
AREAS NOTED ABOVE EXCEPT ZAIRE, EGYPTIANS SEE QADHAFI
AS SUPPORTIVE OF SOVIET POLICY GOALS. CONCLUDING THAT
LIBYAN POWER CAN NOT RATIONALLY STRETCH AS FAR AS
CURRENT ACTIONS, THEY PROFESS CERTAINTY THAT QADHAFI
FUNCTIONING AS PART OF GRANDER SOVIET SCHEME. WHILE
QADHAFI MAY HAVE INTIATED FOREIGN ADVENTURES
INDEPENDENTLY, IN EGYPTIAN VIEW THESE NOW FULFILLING ROLE
DESIGNED BY MOSCOW STRATEGISTS. LARGE BUILD-UP OF SOVIET
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 13017 02 OF 02 041813Z

WEAPONS IN LIBYA IS SEEN AS PART OF THIS GRANDER SCHEME. DESPITE SUPERPOWER PRESENCE, EGYPTIAN LEADERS HAVE EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS, BORDERING ON EAGERNESS, TO REPEAT LAST MONTH'S CAUTIONARY LESSON.

5. LACK OF QADHAFI LEGITIMACY. ANOTHER THEME RUNNING THROUGH SPEECHES OF SADAT, SALIM AND GAMASY IS QADHAFI REGIME'S LACK OF LEGITIMACY. HE SAID TO RULE SOLELY THROUGH TERROR, TO HAVE REORIENTED LIBYAN POLICY AGAINST WISHED OF PEOPLE, AND TO HAVE ABANDONED ARAB CAUSE. CHARACTERISTICS WITH WHICH HE LABELED (LIAR, UNTRUSTWORTHY, BACK-STABBER, APOSTATE, ETC.) HAVE EVEN MORE NEGATIVE CONNOTATIONS IN ARABIC. AS EGYPTIAN LEADERS SPELL IT OUT, THERE OBVIOUS MORAL, NATIONAL AND JURIDICAL MERIT IN BRINGING THIS MAN DOWN.

6. COMMENT: EGYPTIAN LEADERS CLEARLY ARE IRRITATED BY LIBYAN BOASTING OF MILITARY SUCCESS IN BORDER CLASHES AND BY ACCUSATIONS OF U.S. AND SUDANESE ASSISTANCE TO EGYPT. IN THEIR VIEW, FIGHTING STRICTLY LIMITED MILITARY OPERATION IN WHICH EGYPT WAS DOMINANT. LIBYA'S PROFESSED INABILITY TO RECOGNIZE THIS AND, INDEED, LIBYA'S RELATIVE SUCCESS IN TARNISHING PUBLIC IMAGE OF EGYPTIAN MILITARY PROWESS ARE LIKELY ADD TO GOE DESIRE FOR REPEAT PERFORMANCE. NEXT ROUND, SHOULD THERE BE ONE, UNDOUBTEDLY WILL BE DESIGNED TO REMOVE WHATEVER AMBIGUITY EXISTS AS TO WHICH STATE IS DOMINANT REGIONAL POWER.

7. SPEECHES CITED REFTELS APPEAR TO HAVE CAREFULLY DELINATED TRIP-WIRE WHICH WILL LAUNCH EGYPTIAN FORCES TO RENEWED MILITARY ACTIVITY. GAMASY SPECIFICALLY LISTED (A) ANY FURTHER EFFORT DESTABILIZED SUDANESE REGIME, (B) RENEWED LIBYAN SABOTAGE WITHIN EGYPT, OR (C) BORDER
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PAGE 03 CAIRO 13017 02 OF 02 041813Z

INCURSIONS. SIGNIFICANTLY, TRIP-WIRE AS DEFINED PUBLICLY, COULD BE ACTIVATED UNILATERALLY BY EGYPT AS TIME AND PLACE OF ITS CHOOSING. EVEN SHOULD QADHAFI REFRAIN FROM SEEKING RETRIBUTION AGAINST EGYPT, IT WOULD BE RELATIVELY EASY FOR GOE TO MANUFACTURE BORDER INCIDENTS OR ACT OF SABOTAGE TO JUSTIFY RESUMED MILITARY OPERATIONS. GAMASY'S REFERENCE TO MISTREATMENT EGYPTIAN PRISONERS MAY ALSO BE SIGNIFICANT THIS RESPECT.

8. EFFORTS AT POLITICAL AMELIORATION OF EGYPTIAN/

LIBYAN RELATIONS, EITHER THROUGH SUMMIT MEETING OR DISCUSSIONS AT LOWER LEVEL, ARE CURRENTLY REJECTED BY LEADERS ON BOTH SIDES. LIKEWISE, ACTIVE MEDIATION BY THRID PARTY NOW DORMANT. EGYPTIAN LEADERS WERE IRKED BY PUBLIC ARAB REACTIONS TO BORDER CLASH, PARTICULARLY BY THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF QADHAFI ACTIVITIES. THEY ALLOWED THIRD PARTY NEGOTIATING EFFORTS SPIN THEMSELVES OUT WITH NO RESULT AT LEAST PARTIALLY TO PROVE THERE NO REASONING WITH LIBYAN LEADERSHIP. HAVING TESTED WATERS, GOE MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT HEIGHT PUBLIC RECRIMINATIONS PASSED, OR THAT IT NOT OVERLY SIGNIFICANT. ALSO POSSIBLE GOE HAS RECEIED PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS OF SUPPORT--AUGUST 3 PRESS NOTES 42 EXCHANGES OF PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES IN PAST WEEK. IN ANY CASE, MOOD NOW DECIDELY BELLICOSE.

9. EMBASSY ASSESSMENT IS THAT EGYPT WILL WELCOME OPPORTUNITY FOR ANOTHER BASH AT LIBYA. AT MOST, THEY WANT TO SEE QADHAFI OVERTHROWN FROM INSIDE AND, AT LEAST, KEEP HIM SUFFICIENTLY ENGAGED ON HIS EASTERN BORDER TO DIMINISH HIS ABILITY TO INTERVENE IN SUDAN, CHAD, AND ELSEWHERE. GOE PROBABLY WISHES AVOID THIS WHILE SECRETARY IN AREA, ACTIVELY PURSUING MODALITIES FOR RESUMED MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS. ONCE HE LEAVES, WE THINK IT LESS CLEAR THAT EGYPT WILL CONTINUE REFRAIN FROM MILITARY ACTION. AT VERY LEAST, EGYPTIANS HAVE TRIED ESTABLISH PUBLIC RECORD WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY MILITARY OPTION.

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PAGE 04 CAIRO 13017 02 OF 02 041813Z

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Message Attributes

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